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AN INTERVIEW WITH VICTOR MARCHETTI

MIKE WATERS: Victor Marchetti is a former CIA employee, spent 15 years with the agency, and he resigned in 1969. He says he's growing disenchanted with the role of the CIA. He's finding that life outside the agency is a bit difficult.

Victor Marchetti was working on a novel just before he left, a romantic cloak-and-dagger book about intelligence work, *The Rope Dancers*. It was published last fall.

When Marchetti left the CIA he signed a security oath. He told Rich Adams and Susan Stamberg about that oath.

VICTOR MARCHETTI: The statement is very very broad. And it says something to the effect that you will not divulge in writing or in any other form any information that relates to any of the activities. It's just so sweeping. But I signed at the time because when I left the agency, while I was critical of it and I made my -- some of my criticisms known to the director upon leaving, I did not think at that time that I was going to speak out in the fashion I have since. At the time I was just giving it up as a -- this is something that has ended for me and I'm now going to go into something, some other field.

RICH ADAMS: Had you known that you were going to write a book, or even considered it, would you have signed the statement?

MARCHETTI: I probably would not have.

ADAMS: What would have happened to you?

MARCHETTI: I might not have received my vacation pay, my back vacation pay in my last check or something. But I don't know. I -- there are people who leave government who have had clearances who have refused to sign the secrecy agreement. And

to the best of my knowledge nothing has ever happened to them.

One cannot be forced to sign the agreement.

ADAMS: Well, now you're under injunction from publishing any further material. What was the basis of this?

MARCHETTI: Back last autumn, when I started promoting the book, as I was going around the country talking to radio and other people in the media, they seemed to be more interested in why I left the agency and what my views on intelligence were. I would speak out on these points. This made the agency very unhappy.

Then people began asking me to write articles, such as The Nation magazine, Esquire, others. And I began to do that. And I felt that a book certainly would be worthwhile, so I prepared a draft -- what I called a concept for a book on the CIA, which I presented to some publishers. And one of the publishers saw fit to pass this information to the CIA.

When they -- then they saw that I was getting very serious about what I wanted to do and that I was going to back up some of my allegations and theories and so forth with examples. And that blew the whole lid off.

There have been some strange things that have happened to me -- odd phone calls and some odd letters. There were times when I felt that my phone may have been tapped, even that I may have been under surveillance. I can't be sure of this. There are days when I think, "Oh, it's just your imagination!" And there are other days when one wonders about it.

But there's -- I can not say that they have harassed me in any -- any definite way.

SUSAN STAMBERG: But now you're under injunction which is preventing you from publishing a book, which exists -- what? In draft form? Do you have a manuscript on it?

MARCHETTI: It's -- it's in the process of being written now. I cannot show it to my publisher until we resolve this injunction.

You see, this injunction is -- is appealed -- has been appealed. The interesting thing about the injunction, which I find outrageous, is that they -- CIA unilaterally broadened

their contract with me to include fiction. It now reads that anything I write dealing with intelligence -- fiction or nonfictional -- has to be cleared by them.

ADAMS: Now, that wasn't in the original...

MARCHETTI: Absolutely not.

ADAMS: ...agreement you signed.

MARCHETTI: Absolutely not. I think they panicked the district judge into approving this -- this thing originally. And then he just more or less stuck by his guns throughout and decided to hear the case on the basis of a contract. Our case is that it's a First Amendment issue.

STAMBERG: You're talking about it as prior restraint of your freedom to speak?

MARCHETTI: I think so. Beyond that point, what I am doing in a sense is actually testing the whole concept of secrecy within the -- not only intelligence community but within the government itself.

As it stands now, the Director of the CIA can determine what is secret and what is not secret, how long it can -- it should remain so, and -- and this is in my case -- he -- he is both judge and jury. At a minimum it seems to me that if a former government employee wants to speak out, and using his experience to back up his position, if the agency for which he worked feels that this is a violation of -- of any agreement or a danger to the national security, they should feel free, of course, to -- to state their case. But the judgment should be made by an objective third party.

ADAMS: Is involvement with the CIA a lifelong involvement? When you're 22 years old, out of college, and decide that this is what you're going to do, are you, perhaps to a larger degree than, say, working for a -- for a large manufacturer, signing your life away?

MARCHETTI: I don't know that you're signing it away. But I think it does become a more permanent thing than it would in private industry. It's -- in the first place, it's a service, and it was a service that grew up during wartime and cold war, so there's a lot of patriotic emotion involved. It's also a -- there's a lot of mythology connected with it.

STAMBERG: A mystique, kind of.

MARCHETTI: A mystique, yes. Shamanism, in some instances. But the -- and the people who leave, many of the people who leave stay -- stay in touch. They sometimes come back as consultants, sometimes just unofficially as friends will do favors for the agency, small favors. They have an alumni -- an official alumni association that one can join upon leaving. And then they have the old boy network, of course.

I know there is this -- I've read it somewhere that the CIA is a closed corporation like the Mafia. Now, you can carry that analogy to the extreme that nobody leaves the Mafia, nobody leaves the CIA. I -- I don't really think that's true.

This is -- this is one of the reasons why I want to write a book about it. It's a big organization. And what we've been talking about -- I think we're really talking about a very small part. This is the -- the inner core of the clandestine services of the agency. Now, while this core requires a lot of support by other parts of the agency, it still only accounts for about two thirds of the agency. Not everybody in the CIA is a -- is a spy or a spook.

STAMBERG: Then, Victor Marchetti, I can assume from what you've said that you're going to keep on writing?

MARCHETTI: Oh, absolutely. I'm confident we're going to get relief at the appellate level. And if not, we're going on to the Supreme Court. And I hope -- I hope we get some relief there.

I just cannot believe that in the United States of America today that I can be prevented from writing about the CIA and about U.S. intelligence.

WATERS: Author and former CIA employee Victor Marchetti, speaking with Susan Stamberg and Rich Adams.